

INTRODUCTION

It has been frequently pointed out that resurrection is absolutely basic to the Christian faith, first of the Lord (1 Cor.15:13,14) and then of the believer. "Right division" is as needed here as with all other aspects of Scriptural truth. Specially do we need to distinguish between resurrection as it touches the sure and certain hope of the redeemed, and the prize relating to the service of those who are saved.

Some aspects of resurrection may be controversial, but we do not approach the subject or write in a controversial spirit what we want is truth at all costs and therefore we ask the reader to adopt the Berean Spirit (Acts 17:10,11) and test all by the Word of God.

Unless it can be shown that what we have written is unscriptural, it must stand as the truth, the truth of God; for we have sought to base all upon it and not upon our own ideas. With the "impregnable rock of holy Scripture" under our feet, we are surely safe for time and for eternity.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The Saved only, or Saved and Unsaved?

There is no doubt whatsoever that resurrection is one of the most important and basic doctrines of the Scriptures. Without it salvation is a mockery, and the whole Divine purpose of redemption falls to pieces. It is not therefore dispensational, that is, belonging to any particular stewardship of truth, but runs as a foundation throughout every dispensation. Each dispensation has a resurrection as the means of attaining its prize, and also as a means of attaining its hope, and these need to be distinguished, otherwise contradiction and difficulty will result.

However, we are not concerned at the moment to elaborate this, but to ask if the Scriptures teach that the unsaved will be raised from the dead? Some definitely assert that this is not so. Certain movements have held this as a doctrine for many years, so there is nothing new in this view. Others believe it because they say they cannot see any point in God raising unsaved sinners from the grave. Let us state this at the outset. Our knowledge or capacity to understand is no basis for truth. If it were so, many of us would have a very small Bible! There is one criterion and one only, namely, what saith the Scriptures? And so to the Word of God we turn.

To those whose minds are already made up, John 3:36 settles the matter:

"... He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him".

But what does John mean by "life"? Fortunately we need be in no

doubt of this. He uses the word zoe, life, 36 times, alternating "life" with "eternal life":

Life (1:4)
Eternal life (3:15,16,36)
Life (3:36)
Eternal life (4: 14,36; 5:24)
Life (5:24,26,29)
Eternal life (5:39)
Life (5:40)
Eternal life (6:27)
Life (6:33,35)
Eternal life (6:40,47)
Life (6:48,51,53)
Eternal life (6:54)
Life (6:63)
Eternal life (6:68)
Life (8:12; 10:10)
Eternal life (10:28)
Life (11:25)
Eternal life (12:25,50)
Life (14:6)
Eternal life (17:2,3)
Life (20:31)

A consideration of all these passages will surely show that not once does the writer use "life" as pertaining to this present life. The expression "eternal life" needs care, as sometimes it is used as a free gift, and in other cases as a reward, as in the Gospel of Matthew. But this is not our subject at the moment, nor whether we should render *aiōnios* everlasting or age-abiding. The life that John speaks of is resident only in Christ (John 14:6; I John 5:11), and is experienced only by the regenerate. This is the life that the unsaved will not see or enjoy. But this does not prove that there cannot be a resurrection to a different kind of life, or a restoration to natural life. Lazarus was both dead and buried, yet, at the command of the One Who said "I am the Resurrection and the Life", he came forth alive from the grave. But with what kind of life? Did he put on incorruption and immortality? If so, he ought to be with us today! In Matthew 27:52,53 we read:

"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose; And came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many".

Here is a similar resurrection to that of Lazarus, and on this occasion it touched many. In Hebrews 11:35 the writer states:

"Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection".

This verse sets two resurrections side by side, a resurrection to what we may call natural life, that is, the present one, and in this case it cannot be limited to the saved as previously. The other resurrection is "better", that is, contrasted with the previous natural life, in that it gives incorruption and immortality and leads to a prize or crown. To get the truth on this subject balanced and complete, we must constantly keep these two kinds of resurrection in mind.

Charles H. Welch, who was one of the profoundest students of Scripture of this century, after careful examination, rejected the

doctrine of the non-resurrection of the unsaved. Not that he claimed infallibility, but at least, if we want truth, we should give attention to and test what he has written. Those who have The Alphabetical Analysis Part 7 should carefully read pages 203-210. For those who do not have this we will summarize. John 5:27-29 reads:

" ... the Father ... hath given the Son to have life in Himself and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES shall hear His voice, And shall come forth ... they that have done (practised) evil, unto the resurrection of damnation".

Before we go any further, we must stress one golden rule of interpretation and that is, a text can only be understood in the light of its context. This rule never varies, and if broken will only lead to error and disaster. It has been suggested that those who are raised to the resurrection of condemnation or judgment are saved people who are carnal, such as some of the Corinthians were (1 Cor.3: 1,3). But we search in vain for any such idea in this passage. Rather is it an expansion of the truth of salvation offered to all who believe in Christ, not the service of those already saved:

" ... He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (5:24).

The careful reader will note that the regenerate is guaranteed that he will not come into condemnation or judgment. Therefore the resurrection unto judgment of those who practised evil cannot apply only to the saved otherwise we have a direct contradiction. Moreover, ALL that are in the graves must be universal, and therefore unbelievers must be included. The word *krisis* translated "damnation" (A.V.) or judgment (R.V.) occurs five times in John 5, namely verses 22,24, 27,29 and 30, and these should be studied carefully.

Mr. Welch continues:

"This, however, is not all. There is but one occurrence of *krisis* written in John's Gospel before this fifth chapter and that is John 3: 19, "This is the condemnation", and it is of the utmost importance because it contains not only the word *krisis*, but the only other occurrence in the four Gospels of the words translated "done evil". These words are in the original *hoi ta phaula praxantes* (John 5:29), and *pas ho phaula prasson* (John 3:19), the one reading, "those the evil things having practised", the other reading "every one who practises evil things". Nowhere else does John use the verb *prasso* (practise) throughout his writings than in John 3:20 and John 5:29. Nowhere else does John use *phaulos* (evil) than in these self-same passages. The conclusion is irresistible. John five is a continuation and expansion of John three, and if John three deals with two classes, the saved and the lost, John five deals with them also. If John three deals with one class, the saved, which are divided into two companies, then John five will teach the same. Let us, therefore, turn to John three, and examine this passage afresh.

The section commences with verse fourteen and ends with verse twenty-one. Two classes and two classes only are envisaged in the passage where Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.

Those who lived, and those who perished, and these alternatives are clearly stated in verse sixteen. At the close of the chapter, the testimony of John 3:14-21 is summed up:

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (v.36).

They that have done good - the resurrection of LIFE.

They that have practised evil - the resurrection of judgment, condemnation and wrath.

"This is the condemnation". Such hate the light and will not come to it, lest their evil deeds be exposed. Those who enter the resurrection of life are said to have done "truth", and that their deeds are "wrought in God". John 3:36 contains the only reference in this Gospel to the wrath of God. His other references, namely Revelation 6: 16,17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19 and 19:15, cannot possibly speak of the redeemed" (*The Alphabetical Analysis Part 7* pp. 205 and 206).

Whatever future judgment the saved person may have for the quality of his service (1 Cor.3:11-15), he certainly will not experience God's wrath. Romans 5:9 expressly declares that "... being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him", and further such is assured that he will not come into condemnation (Rom. 8:1). However, the solemn occurrences of wrath in the book of Revelation show that this is directed primarily against the LIE and Babylonianism. Wrath is never associated with Adam's sin. Though the heart of God must have been intensely grieved at the sin of Adam, we do not once read of wrath in Genesis three. We have heard it said that when the unsaved die they are experiencing the wrath of God. But this is putting Divine wrath in a wrong context. Many an unregenerate man has died peace fully in his bed, and if this is experiencing God's wrath we do not wonder if some think the awfulness of this has been greatly exaggerated. The day of wrath, as the Book of the Revelation teaches, is yet future, and it is a most solemn and terrible experience to undergo as the seven vial judgments testify, for in them "is completed the wrath of God" (Rev. 15:1,7).

The apostle Paul told the pagan philosophers at Athens, that God "will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17:30,31). These philosophers were certainly not saved, so Paul is not addressing saved people who were walking carnally, and in order for the message to have had a very practical bearing, it must have included them when they were informed of this future day of judgment, in which case they will be raised from the dead. Later on in Acts 24: 15, Paul declares before Felix that there will be a "resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust"; and Felix trembled when he heard of "judgment to come" (24:25). Can "unjust" ever describe a saved person? Adikos, unjust, occurs eleven times, and we give the references (Matt.5:45; Luke 16:10,11; 18:11; Acts 24:15; Rom. 3:5; I Cor.6:1,9; Hebrews 6:10; I Pet.3:18; 2 Pet.2:9). The reader should consult each verse and note the context. There is only one reference that might be construed as referring to the saved, and that is the unjust steward of Luke 16. But if the way the Holy Spirit has used a word is a guide to its meaning, then it must normally refer to the unsaved. "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor.6:9), and it is certain that Paul never uses

the word "unjust" of a saved person. Peter, in his first epistle, refers to Christ bearing the sins of His people, "the Just for the unjust" (1 Pet.3:18), and later on in the second epistle states that the "Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Pet.2:9). In the third chapter he declares "the heavens and the earth which are now... are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (3: 7). These contexts cannot possibly relate to the saved. Peter is using the word "ungodly" in exactly the same way that Jude does (see Jude 4, 15, 18).

We may well ask, who are those who are cast into the lake of fire in Revelation 20:15? Are they the saved or the lost? In verse 12, John states that he saw the "dead, small and great, stand before God". They were raised from the dead, for verse thirteen says:

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (margin, the grave) delivered up the dead which were in them ..."

If the unregenerate are never to be raised from the grave, then these referred to in this context must all be saved people. This is the only occasion in Scripture which refers to a resurrection from the sea of those who have been drowned. Are we going to assert that only saved people have ever been drowned? Surely we must include the unsaved here!

In Matthew chapter eleven the Lord begins to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works were done. Regarding Chorazin and Bethsaida He said:

"But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you" (Matt.11:21).

and of Capernaum (verses 23, 24):

"... for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land-of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee".

There is surely no need to stress the character of the men of Sodom. They were certainly not the Lord's children, yet He assures us there is a future reckoning for them and also for the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon who rejected Him after so much miraculous proof of His Messiahship. In the next chapter the Lord declares to the opposing Pharisees and Scribes that the men of Nineveh and the queen of the South would rise in the judgment with "this generation" and condemn it. The word translated "rise" is *anistemi*, the normal word for physical resurrection, and is used some 38 times in this sense. The queen of the South was not of the chosen race of Israel, nor were the men of Nineveh. God had instructed Jonah to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and warn them His judgment for their sin was at hand, and in forty days the city would be overthrown (Jonah 3:4). God said "their wickedness is come up before Me" (Jonah 1 :2). But they repented, that is to say, they ceased from their evil ways and God withheld the threatened judgment, for they had not filled their cup of iniquity. Assyria was well-known for its violence and cruelty. The king of Nineveh sent out a decree that they should amend their ways and turn from "the violence that is in their hands" (Jonah 3:8). "And God saw their works that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto

them; and He did it not" (Jonah 3:10).

However, the judgment did fall on Assyria later. It should be clear that the repentance of the Ninevites to which Christ refers in Matthew 12 was a cessation from their abounding sin that called for judgment. In no sense can we say that it turned the Ninevites into the people of God as Israel were. Yet they are to rise in resurrection and condemn the favoured generation to which the Lord came in the flesh!

Coming to the O.T. and Isaiah 26:14:

"They are dead, they shall not live; they are the deceased, they shall not rise, therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish".

The "deceased" does not refer to ordinary human beings but to the *Rephaim*, having their origin in the days of Noah, when the evil seed, the giants, through the work of Satan, corrupted all flesh on the earth except Noah and his family. The word is used in the singular and plural, and we see no valid reason for making any difference in the meaning of singular and plural for the simple reason that neither *raphah* (singular) or *rephaim* (plural) are the normal words for death or the dead. These are *muth* translated to die some 420 times and *maveth* death 128 times. The *Rephaim*, as monsters, are to have no resurrection, "they shall not rise". If the reader has The Companion Bible he should read appendices 23 and 25 which deal with this subject including the *Rephaim* very fully, also *The Berean Expositor* volume 20, page 193 in the article "Who are the Deceased?" *The Companion Bible* notes each of the eight occurrences of the plural *Rephaim*, including Proverbs 21:16, "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead (*rephaim*)". (See also 2:18 and *The Companion Bible* note). Proverbs 21:16 clearly teaches that the sinner will end up in destruction like the *Rephaim*. The word "remain" *nuach* does not mean "to permanently stay in" but "to rest". Young's Literal Version reads "in an assembly of *Rephaim* resteth", or Moffatt, "will find his rest among the dead below". The assembly of the *Rephaim* is not a description of dead human beings as such. If it were, then the usual word *muth* would have been used, and not *rephaim*. As *The Companion Bible* points out, there is no reason why this word, either singular or plural, should not be treated as a proper name, "*Rephaim*", in all its occurrences and not just ten times as it is in the A. V. It would then be apparent that it does not refer to the normal dead, but to the monsters and their descendants of Genesis six, and so cannot be used to support the idea that there is no resurrection for the unsaved.

As for Psalm 1:5 "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment", the Hebrew *qum* (stand) is of frequent occurrence in the O.T. "Arise", "rise", "rise up", translates 354 of its occurrences. Its basic meaning is "to stand" or "stand firm", and there is no need to render it in any other way in Psalm one. Moffatt's version is "When judgments come, the ungodly shall not stand, nor shall the sinful last in the community of the just". No indeed, they are likened to the chaff which is swept away by the wind (verse 4), which clearly shows what the phrase "the ungodly shall not stand" means. Psalm 1:5 surely gives no secure basis for teaching that the unregenerate have no resurrection from the dead.

We might further consider the implication of the challenging question

put by the apostle Paul in Romans 3:5,6, "For then how shall God judge the world?" or of Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"; but we feel there is no need to pursue this matter any further. If only one verse of the Scriptures clearly teaches the raising to life of the unsaved, then we cannot assert with truth that they will be left in the grave for ever.

Does it really matter whether we believe this or not? Ephesians six brings before us the armour that God has provided so that the child of God can be safe from the malignity of his great enemies, Satan and the world-rulers of this present darkness (6:12). Truth is part of this protective shield (verse 14). We dare not let error of any kind come in, otherwise there is a hole in the shield through which the fiery darts of the evil one will surely penetrate. Any departure from Truth simply gives place to the Devil, the arch-deceiver.

The New Testament clearly shows that resurrection is so basic and important that we cannot afford to be wrong about it in any detail. Hymenreus and Philetus did not deny the truth of resurrection; they merely mis-dated it, yet this brought upon them the severe condemnation of the apostle Paul, who asserted that such teaching had an evil effect on others and overthrew their faith, and in doing so militated against the progress of the Truth of God (2 Tim.1:17,18). Men are not helpless machines. They are moral creatures with a responsibility to their Creator. To what degree this is so, only He knows and we do not pretend to judge. To those who have never had the witness of the Person and redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is conscience, the law in miniature, speaking to their minds (Rom.2:14-16). God is not only the righteous Judge of all His people, but the Judge of all the earth, the moral Governor of the Universe. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen.18:25). We leave the future of the unbeliever in His hands at the Day of Judgment.